

What is hearing loss?

Hearing

Hearing Health

This paper tells me about my ears and hearing. It shows some problems a person can get with their ears and hearing. It also shows what I can do to try and keep my hearing healthy.

The more I know, the better I can take care of my hearing.

Simply Health

Simply Health helps me learn more about health care. Simply Health gives me the information I need to talk to my doctors.

How do we hear?

Sound moves in air. It also moves in solid objects.

My ears take in the sounds around me.

- My **outer ear** catches sound.
- It sends sound to my **middle ear**.
- My middle ear sends it to my **inner ear**.
- My **inner ear** sends sound to my brain.
- My brain tells me what the sounds are, such as a car honk.



How do I tell if I have good hearing?

When I have healthy ears and good hearing, I can hear all kinds of sounds. I can hear loud and soft sounds.

I can hear a person whisper to me. I know what they have said.



Why is it good if I hear well?

If I hear well, I can live better. If I cannot hear people speak, it is hard to talk with them.

What is hearing loss?

Hearing loss is when I cannot hear some sounds any more.

How can I know if I have hearing loss?

There are ways to tell if I have hearing loss.

- I see that someone talks to me. But it is hard to hear all the words.
- Sounds are harder to hear.
- I hear better with one ear than the other.
- It is hard for me to hear the letters S, F, Z.
- People think I do not listen to them.
- I hear a hiss, buzz or ring after I listen to loud sounds, such as music or a train.
- My ears feel full of something. It is hard for me to hear what I want to hear.
- I jump when someone walks up behind me. This is because I cannot hear them.



What do I need to know about hearing tests?

Who will help me hear better?

I can get help from these people.

- Family doctor.
- Ear, nose and throat (ENT) doctor.
- Audiologist (**aw-dee-all-ah-jist**).

They help me take care of my ears. They help with my hearing health.

Family doctor

My family doctor will check my ears for problems, such as:

- **Infection** (in-fek-shun)
- Lots of **earwax**
- A hole in my eardrum
- Hearing loss



otoscope

When do I go to my doctor right away?

- I have a bad ear-ache (**eer-ayk**).
- My ear itches (**it-ches**) inside.
- My ears feel like I have a plug in them all the time.
- Something is stuck in my ear such as Kleenex, Q-tips or food. My doctor may give me medicine for my ear. She may send me to an **ENT** doctor.

The ear doctor will look inside my ear.



What is an ear, nose and throat (ENT) doctor?

ENT doctors know lots about the **ear**, **nose** and **throat**.

An ENT can help with problems in my ears.

An ENT can test how I hear.

My doctor may think I need a hearing test.

If so, she will send me to an **audiologist**.



What is an audiologist (**aw-dee-all-ah-jist**)?

An **audiologist** knows about hearing. They test how we hear.

What does an audiologist do?

An audiologist will ask me about how I hear.

She looks in my ear. She tests how I hear.

- She finds out if I hear soft sounds.
- She finds out if I hear loud sounds.

How many kinds of hearing tests are there?

There are 3 kinds of hearing tests. They are **basic**, **bone conductor** and **speech** tests.

What is a **basic** hearing test?

The basic hearing test finds out if I have hearing loss. If I hear fine, I do not need any more tests.

What happens at a basic hearing test?

I sit in a sound-proof room with a window into another room.

The audiologist puts **ear phones** (fones) on me.

The audiologist goes outside of the room and sits on the other side of the window.

- I can see her.
- I can hear her through the ear phones.
- She uses a microphone (**mike**-row-fone) to talk to me.

• She tells me what I need to do.

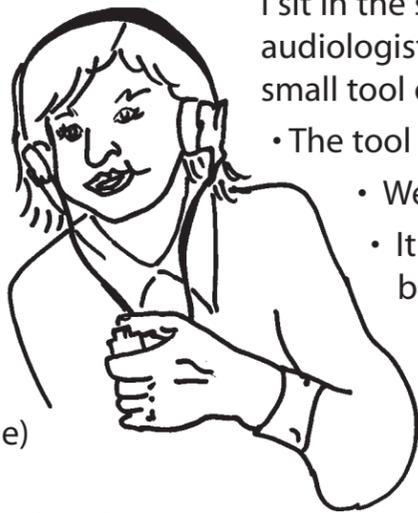
I listen to a lot of beeps.

The beeps play one after another.

- The beeps sound like computer beeps (not like car beeps).
- I only hear beeps in this test. I will not hear other sounds.
- First, I listen with one ear.
- Then, I listen with my other ear.

I press a button when I hear a sound.

A machine (**ma-sheen**) marks when I hear sounds. The marks make a picture called an **auditory graph** (**aw-dih-tore-ee graf**).



Auditory graph

What is a **bone conductor** test?

A bone conductor (**cun-duck-tore**) test checks how well I hear. This test tells how I hear sounds that move by bones in my head. This test finds out what kind of hearing loss I have.

I only take this test if the **basic** test says I do not hear well.

What happens at a bone conductor test?

I sit in the same room as the audiologist. The audiologist puts a small tool on me.

- The tool is called a **bone conductor**.
- We call it a **bone tool**.
- It goes on a bone behind my ear.

The bone tool makes sounds.

- The sounds go through my bone.
- The sound goes into my inner ear.

The audiologist asks me what I hear.

- I tell her when I hear a sound (just like I did in the basic hearing test).

What is a **speech** test?

A speech test finds out if my **auditory nerve** works. This test finds out if I can hear words. I may hear sounds, but not hear the words.

What happens at a speech test?

I sit in a **sound-proof room** with a window into another room.

The audiologist sits on the other side of the window. Someone says words.

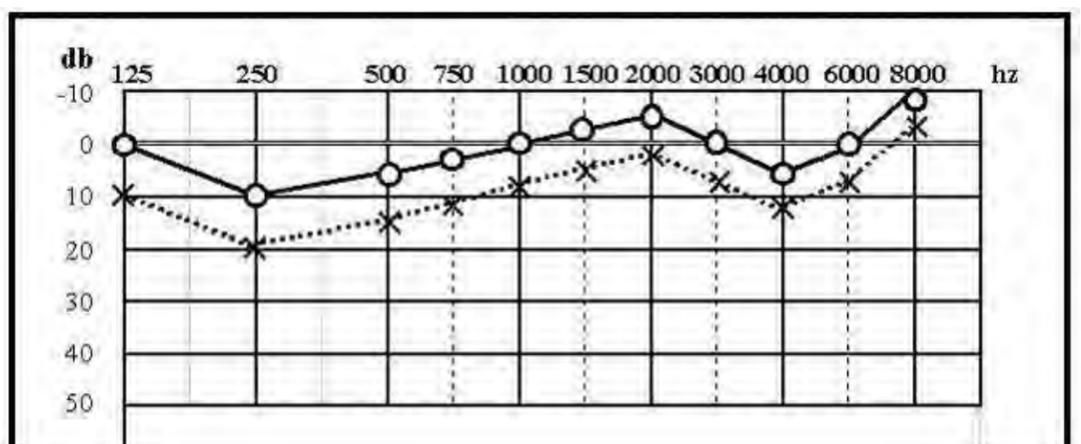
I say the words that I hear to the audiologist.

At first, the words are at the same **volume**. This means they are at the same loudness.

Then words get softer over time.

- I hear words that have two sounds to them, such as kitten or ball-park.
- I also hear words that have one sound, such as cat or dog.

Hearing tests do not hurt!



How do I get hearing loss?

I get hearing loss if part of my ear does not work. I can also get hearing loss if something in my ear blocks sound.

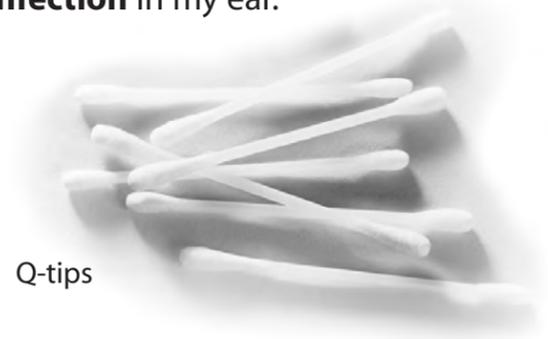
What can make part of my ear stop working?

- Loud sounds, such as loud music.
- Illness, such as an ear **infection**.
- Some medicines can hurt ears. My doctor will know which ones are safe.
- An injury to my ear, such as getting hit hard in my ear.
- Smoking can stop blood from getting to my ears. My ears need blood to work well.
- I may lose a bit of my hearing as I get older.
- Some times hearing loss runs in families. If my mother or father has hearing loss, I may also.



What can block sounds in my ear?

- Lots of ear-wax in my ear.
- Something that is stuck in my ear, like Kleenex or a Q-tip.
- An **infection** in my ear.



Can I stop hearing loss?

Yes and no. Some things I cannot stop:

- I cannot stop it if I get sick with **infection** (in-fek-shun).
- I cannot stop it if my family has hearing loss.



Turn down loud music



No Q-tips!



Ear protectors

What can I do to stop hearing loss?

- When I listen to music, it must not be too loud.
- When I watch TV, it must not be too loud.
- If I work at a noisy job, I must wear earplugs. Or I must wear ear protectors. That will keep the sound low.
- I can keep my fingers and Q-tips out of my ears. I can ask my doctor to clean my ears.
- I can see my doctor when I get a cold. Or when my ears are itchy or sore. I could have an **infection** (in-fek-shun). An ear **infection** can make me lose my hearing.
- I can tell my doctor when I cannot hear well.

What are hearing aids?

Hearing aids can help me hear. They make sounds louder. They make sounds clearer. They use a battery.

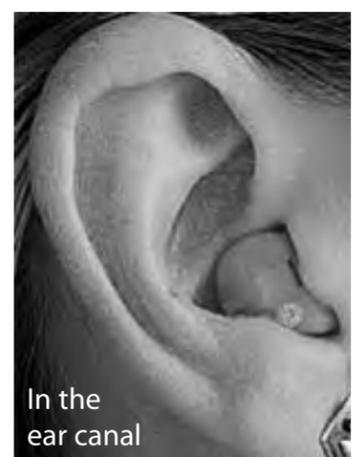
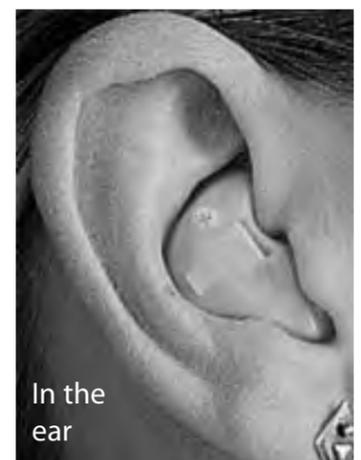
There are 4 kinds of hearing aids:

- behind the ear
- in the ear
- way in the **ear canal**
- in the **ear canal** (**eer ka-nal**): this is a long tube. It starts at the hole in my ear. It goes back into my ear.

Everyone is not the same.

My ears are different from other people.

Some persons do not like how hearing aids look. My audiologist (**aw-dee-all-ah-jist**) or **ENT** doctor can help me pick hearing aids that look different. Then I get the hearing aid that is best for me.



What different hearing aids look like.

What else can help me hear better?

There are other tools that can help me hear.



This headset helps me hear the TV.



This is an alarm. I can hook it up to my lights and my doorbell. If my doorbell rings, the light will flash.

I can ask my doctor about hearing tools. She can show me or tell me about them.

Do not smoke!

- If I smoke, I must stop smoking!
- Smoking can stop blood from getting to my ears.
- My ears need blood to work well.



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What the hard words mean

Audiologist

(**aw**-dee-**all**-ah-jist):

An **audiologist** is not a doctor. They go to school. They learn how we hear. They test how we hear.

Auditory graph

(**aw**-di-**tor**-ee graf):

A picture that has lines. The lines show what sounds I heard.

Auditory nerve

(**aw**-di-**tor**-ee): The auditory nerve is like a wire. It goes from my ear to my brain. It sends the sound to my brain.

Basic hearing test: I will have this hearing test first. This test finds out if I have hearing loss. It will find out if I need more hearing tests.

Bone conductor: This is a tool. It makes sound. The audiologist or ENT will put it behind my ear. It will send sound to the bones behind my ear. I may feel a rattle on my head. We call it a **bone tool**.

Bone conductor

(**cun**-**duck**-tore) **test:**

This checks how well I hear. It tells how I hear sounds that move by bones in my head. This test finds out what kind of hearing loss I have. I only take this test if the basic test says I do not hear well.

Ear canal (eer ka-nal):

This is a long tube.

It starts at the hole in my ear. It goes back into my ear.

Ear Nose and Throat

(**ENT**) **Doctor:** An ENT doctor knows lots about the ear, nose and throat. An ENT can help with problems in my ears.

Earwax: Ears make wax. Sometimes earwax does not come out of the ear. Then the wax builds up. Earwax is deep inside the ear. It can block sound.

Hearing aid: A hearing aid can help me hear. They make sounds louder. They use a battery.

Hearing loss: Hearing loss is when I cannot hear some sounds very well or any more.

Infection (in-fek-shun): When germs make a part of my body swell up and make puss. It can hurt and feel hot.

Inner ear: The most inner part of the ear. I cannot see it. The auditory nerve is in the inner ear.

Middle ear: I cannot see the middle ear. It is inside my ear.

Speech test: Sometimes we call it a **speech recognition test**. This test tells if I have problems with my auditory nerve. I may hear sound when someone speaks, but not know what words they said.

Volume: How loud or quiet a sound is. Such as, how loud or quiet my TV is.

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